

Paradiso Countdown

On August 9th, 66 NC, a massive spaceship of clearly alien design docked with the EveningStar Orbital, the Paradiso headquarters of O-12. It was impossible to hide. Aurelia Cardoso, a freelance journalist with the Maya investigative aggregate *Eye on the Sky*, was the first to break the story, but soon the orbital space around the EveningStar was swarming with reporters while others focused powerful telescopic lenses skywards from Damburg and Horselberg.

Panic began to spread as rumors flew that O-12 was negotiating a surrender with the Combined Army. All the worst horror stories of how badly things were going on the front began to circulate anew. For a long, horrible moment a terrible reality began to be accepted as the truth: Humanity had lost the war.

Ninety minutes later, O-12's Paradiso High Commissioner Natalia Hesse issued a public address. The alien vessel was not from the Combined Army. It belonged to the Tohaa Trinomial. They, too, were at war with the Evolved Intelligence. Humanity had just gained a powerful ally. "This is a new time," Commissioner Hesse announced. "Full of opportunities."

The war is far from over. It has scarcely begun.

OPERATIONAL SUMMARY

After three weeks of intense negotiation on the EveningStar Orbital, the Tohaa Contact Treaty was signed on August 30th, 66 NC. The work, however, was just beginning. While the Contact Treaty created an agreement in detailed principle, its signing merely marked the beginning of the Alliance Summit, a vast trinary conference, negotiated in the diplomatic style of the Tohaa, which would hash out the exact operational parameters and responsibilities of the Trinomial and the Human Sphere under the treaty.

The player characters are assigned to work security at the summit and things almost immediately go wrong: On their first day, they discover the dead body of an O-12 diplomat named Edmund Alinari. In order to keep the summit on track, the diplomatic leadership decides to info-quarantine the death. (Nobody wants sensationalistic journalists like Aurelia Cardoso getting their hands on the story.) That means that the player characters are left in charge of the investigation into Alinari's murder.

Alinari's killer can eventually be identified as Sora Himura, a Yu Jing ambassadorial aide. When the player characters go to arrest Himura, however, they find her already dead. In fact, she has been dead since before Alinari's murder.

All the evidence suggests that a Shasvastii Speculo Killer has infiltrated the Alliance Summit. In response to this revelation, the Tohaa will become directly involved in the investigation and demand that the player characters continue to lead it. If their faith has not been misplaced, the player characters will be able to track down the Speculo Killer just in time to prevent the Shasvastii from assassinating one of the Tohaa ambassadors.

In the immediate aftermath of the assassination attempt, the player characters discover that the Speculo Killer had received the Roshnii code, which can be translated as, "Unleash the panic." As they realize that there must be multiple Shasvastii agents active at the summit, the EveningStar Orbital is wracked with explosions.

The Shasvastii infiltrators have disabled the station's defenses and its maneuvering capability. Before anyone on the station has time to react, a Combined Army battlecruiser appears and launches a devastating assault. The player characters are ordered to escort the Tohaa ambassador to a crash coffin for emergency evacuation.

Unfortunately, a Combined Army boarding pinnace has breached the orbital. The player characters will need to fight their way through Morat boarding parties in order to reach the crash coffin and escape.

Wilderness of Mirrors

Ariadna: The player character is given a data packet which contains embarrassing information about Ambassador Lisa Díaz' sister, Mariana Díaz. After being arrested for petty theft on Nirvana last year, Díaz managed to hush the incident up and it never hit the Maya tabloids. The player character needs to deliver it to Aurelia Cardoso of *Eye on the Sky* via a dead drop.

Haqqislam: At some point early on Day 2, the player character is summoned to a personal meeting with Saladin. Haqqislam intelligence sources have reason to believe that members of their team may be attempting to steal Tohaa diplomatic secrets. It is absolutely vital that the Tohaa not be insulted in this fashion. The player character is to take whatever means necessary to prevent the theft from occurring.

Nomads: The Praxis laboratories want samples taken of the Tohaa pheromonal language. (If they could gain direct samples of the pheromones themselves or the Tohaa organs responsible for creating and detecting the pheromones that would be even better.) The player character is given an experimental device that can be used with a Science test (D1 if Tohaa are actively communicating in the area, D3 to sample the area after the Tohaa have left) to take samples, although it requires a Stealth test to use it surreptitiously.

PanOceania / Yu Jing: Both PanOceania and Yu Jing want exclusive, covert access to the intel carried by Tohaa diplomats. It is of vital importance, however, that the player character does not create an interplanetary incident. They also suspect that other powers are interested in gaining Tohaa intel and it would be advantageous if those efforts could be exposed (in order to discredit those factions).

Corporations: The player character's corporate sponsor wants covert monitoring devices installed in the Silver Arch Sphere. (It is relatively easy to accomplish this during a late hour block of time when the sphere is not in use. However, once the sphere becomes the potential target of a Shasvastii assassination attempt there is a very high risk that the player character's surveillance devices will be found.)

Criminals: The criminal faction the player character is associated with wants leverage in the Alliance Summit. That means blackmail material: Preferably on the Tohaa, but they will take whatever they can get. (And the more important the target, the better.)

Mercenaries: Mercenary companies are always looking for an edge. There is no question that the Tohaa have military technology far beyond human capabilities. The player character needs to get access to it (either through subterfuge or negotiation).

BACKGROUND

In 65 NC, O-12 came into possession of an alien device known as the “Black Box.” Efforts to fully decrypt and interpret the contents of the Black Box continue even today, but among the earliest information obtained from the Box was the knowledge that there was another race at war with the EI, a race named the Tohaa. The Black Box also yielded coordinates leading to a new wormhole in the Paradiso system which apparently led to star systems controlled by the Tohaa.

This information was turned over to the O-12 Oberhaus and, following a series of tense, secret debate, the Oberhaus ultimately decided that, “The enemy of my enemy is my friend.” Or, as Senator Eduardo Baez infamously declared as the vote was called, “In the darkness, even the unknown light is welcome.” Humanity needed an ally.

Construction began almost immediately on the facilities required to open a portal through the wormhole. The portal, now codenamed Daedalus, was opened. A message probe sent. The Tohaa responded.

Tohaa

Although they have been more successful in their clash with the Combined Army than most of the species, now extinct or assimilated, that have tried to resist the hegemonic flood of the Evolved Intelligence in the past, the Tohaa have been waging a war of painful attrition for a long time. The ordeal has taken a toll of lost lives and lost planets. The Tohaa know that, unless they can change the course of their struggle, they too will succumb to the EI’s onslaught.

Physical Appearance: The Tohaa are generally taller and more slender than humans, usually possessing a gracile beauty and pale, mocha-cream skin. Their soldiers, however, have often received extensive bio-modification, which can result in starkly inhuman and almost demonic features. (A prominent example are the blood red, gill-like structures which are commonly grafted to their cheeks and provide a robust form of atmospheric filtering.)

Due to the tenuous atmosphere of their home planet, the Tohaa’s large, pointed ears ironically provide them with only the poorest of hearing. (This thin atmosphere, offering little protection against the radiation of their sun, also explains their thick skin.) Compensating for this auditory inadequacy, however, are the thick tendrils which form the “phero blossom” on the back of the Tohaa head. These have been dismissed as “alien hair” in a number of Maya broadcasts, but these tendrils are actually formed from layered, bio-mesh sensory surfaces.

Personality: The Tohaa's cerebral tissues provide a remarkable, multi-threaded access to a near-eidetic memory. But each redundant copy of the memory has a different "flavor" — a unique mix of sense memories or associations. This multifaceted perception of memory and reality means that the Tohaa perception of self inherently considers things from diverse points of view; they instinctively play the devil's advocate. This creates a curiously zen-like consciousness which stands in stark contrast to the "brutal thoughts" of humanity. (Although, once again, their military often stands in strong contrast to this.)

There is a certain danger to them. Under their cool demeanor and their distant courtesy you can sense a two-faced nature. They are well-versed in the mechanisms of deceit. They know how to twist laws and treaties. Their refined vocabulary fails to completely conceal the fundamental meaning of their words. They want something from us, and whatever they offer us in return will not be worth our while. Even worse, their conscience will be clean. From the way they carry themselves it is apparent they emphatically approve of double-dealings, schemes, and the trade of political loyalties. We are dealing with veterans of intergalactic negotiation, and we are clearly at a disadvantage. We are merely children playing in the houses of our elders.

- Excerpt from "On the Tohaa Contact Treaty", Saladin (O-12 Liaison Officer), Internal File of the O-12 Oberhaus (Concilium Prima)

The sensory surfaces of their tendrils provide an incredible olfactory sensitivity while also serving as the largest and most complex of the seven major pheromonal zones located on their bodies. The rich pheromonal exchanges these organs make possible largely define the Tohaa language and culture.

The intimate nature of pheromonal communication perhaps explains the natural gregariousness of the Tohaa. Tohaa who, for whatever reason, become excluded from a group will immediately seek to form or join a new one as quickly as possible. In the absence of other Tohaa, these instincts will reach out to members of alien species. This can be both a boon (allowing the Tohaa to form fast friendships and alliances), but can also be a bane: It often takes no more than a relatively short period of enforced isolation for a Tohaa to suffer from an extreme, almost crippling depression.

Trinary: The political, social, military and even personal structures of Tohaa life are fundamentally trinary. There are three executives in their political organizations. Three members, in different combinations, in their family nucleus. Multiples of three in their work groups. Three agents in their police patrols. Three values of truth in their systems of logic. Three combinations on their locks. Absolutely everything in the Tohaa world is built on a base-3 architecture. It is strange for them to even think outside of the number three.

During their adolescence, Tohaa form strong social triads. The members of the triad each receive a second surname composed of the first syllable of the inherited surname of each member. The composition of these sororal triads often fluctuate over time (which also results in a Tohaa's sororal surname changing).

Most adult Tohaa, of course, will also eventually form a familial triad (granting them a third surname). A child born to the triad inherits a surname based on the familial triad at the time of its birth, but the familial triad itself is usually unstable and breaks apart after the child is born. A new triad is formed by two parents and the child, with the third parent leaving to find a new family triad to join. No other children will be born to the family triad until the firstborn leaves to pursue higher education.

In some cases, the three-adult familial triad will be maintained. These triads, however, quickly give birth to two additional children, creating a stable family dynamic featuring a parental triad and a filial one. (The Tohaa often ascribe significance to someone raised as a "trio child" in much the same way that humans talk about someone being raised as an "only child".)

Tohaa Diplomats: Like everything else in their society, Tohaa diplomacy is trinary in nature and the Alliance Summit is being structured as a trinary conference. The Tohaa, therefore, have three major ambassadors conducting negotiations in parallel: Maara Seegur, Paanil Comaara, and Naaz Engooril.

During the negotiations of the Tohaa Contact Treaty, the ambassadors of the Human Sphere spent a great deal of time trying to figure out which of the Tohaa ambassadors had seniority or authority or the final word. What they quickly discovered was that all three tracks of negotiation with the Tohaa were of equal importance and that ground lost in any one of the parallel negotiations would manifest itself severely in the final agreements. The human ambassadors are, frankly, still scrambling to catch up. Advanced mathematicians have actually been called in to help unravel the vast operations of Tohaa ternary logic which, despite lacking any name in human languages, are fundamental to the final triad conference committees which create the harmony of the ultimate agreement.

Human Sphere Diplomats

The confusion of the Human Sphere ambassadors in dealing with the inherently decentralized structure of the trinary conference is heightened because the Human Sphere's diplomatic efforts are themselves not well-coordinated. Although O-12 was responsible for initially contacting the Tohaa, it is clear that the superpowers of the Sphere would never accept the terms of a treaty negotiated without their direct input. As a result, the Human Sphere is

represented on the EveningStar Orbital by six diplomatic teams, with separate ambassadors representing Bureau Aegis, Ariadna, Haqqislam, the Nomads, PanOceania, and Yu Jing.

Ambassador Marc Cullen (Bureau Aegis): Ambassador Cullen, representing the neutral interests of O-12, is theoretically the ultimate authority in the Human Sphere's negotiations, but the reality is significantly different. The trinary conference format has forced Cullen to improvise a structure of shared authority in which the diplomatic parties of the major powers are being juggled into *ad hoc* alliances of responsibility in each of the three negotiation tracks. This has forced Cullen to exert even more effort to hold it all together. Somehow he keeps his jet black pompadour perfectly styled throughout, but there are dark bags under his harried eyes.

Ambassador Aaron Strong (Ariadna): Aaron Strong is a jocular, no-nonsense, shoot-from-the-hip kind of guy who will stab you in the back in a heartbeat if it would mean buying an inch of space for his beleaguered homeworld. Strong somehow manages to always have a bottle of Coca-Cola close to hand.

Ambassador Fidda Balawi (Haqqislam): The kohl-eyed Balawi earned her nickname of Oncilla ("tiger cat") with her absolutely ruthless negotiation. "Have you been scratched by the cat?" has become something of a catchphrase in diplomatic circles, but the real professionals in the room value Balawi's scrupulous precision and unerring (albeit brutal) honesty. In either case, everyone comes to the alert when her lustrous, black crown braid enters the room.

Ambassador Samuél Narváez (Nomads): The acid-burns marring his right arm testify to Narváez' years of service in the *Corregidor* mercenary companies. His scowled countenance can be seen flitting back and forth across the station, trying to single-handedly manage military concerns across all three tracks of the trinary conference (which the Tohaa find unseemly). He has a trusted team of subordinates trying to guarantee that the Nomads will have equal access to any advanced technology shared by the Tohaa.

Ambassador Lisa Díaz (PanOceania): Díaz is a native of Paradiso. Her grandparents emigrated to the planet directly from Earth and her entire family, except for her younger sister Mariana, was killed in the fall of Ravensbrücke. Díaz is a fierce patriot, believing staunchly that the "wall of Paradiso" must stand or the entire Human Sphere will fall.

Scenario Threads: Mariana Díaz

Mariana Díaz may have escaped Ravensbrücke, but she did not escape intact. She was sepsitorized by Shasvastii agents before being released as a sleeper agent posing as a refugee. Mariana can be added to *Paradiso Countdown*, possibly being activated by the Shasvastii as part of their Roshnii protocol before assassinating her own sister. Alternatively, Ambassador Díaz could return to the campaign after the EveningStar disaster when top secret information begins leaking from her office. The player characters will be able to trace the leak back to Mariana and discover the horrible truth.

Ambassador Dai Ming (Yu Jing): Yu Jing believes that it had a rightful and exclusive claim to the Black Box and they are still bitterly unhappy with O-12's interference with their "sovereign rights". This lingering dissatisfaction is reflected in Ambassador Dai's frosty distance from the other diplomats at the Alliance Summit. It is quite startling that such cold rage can be bottled up in her petite form.

EveningStar Orbital

The EveningStar Orbital is built around a large, globular center. A long spindle leads down to seven, disc-like landing bays — one for civilian traffic and six others reserved for military staging — including docking facilities for capital ships. Although it generally maintains a low orbit above Paradiso, the station possesses high orbital maneuvering capability and extensive defensive systems.

The Landing Discs

The seven landing bays of the EveningStar are prodigious facilities. Each is named after one of the Heptanese islands of Ancient Greece: The civilian bay is known as Cythera, while the military bays are named Corfu, Paxos, Lefkas, Ithaca, Kefalonia, and Zante.

The station serves as home to the Paradiso High Commissioner, the Bureau Aegis system headquarters, and the Coordinated Command of the human coalition forces in the system. Its large civilian population regularly brushes shoulders with military personnel and it is not inaccurate to describe it as the beating heart of the Paradiso system. Preparations are being made to also make it home to the Tohaa embassy.

Melissa

Melissa is the pseudo-AI that manages the EveningStar. Her avatar is elfin in feature, with long white hair that glows softly with a nimbus of light. She prefers to manifest "physically" in augmented reality and has developed a personality quirk that causes her to act like the close friend of anyone on the station. (This

usually includes harvesting information from their social mesh to create faux familiarity.)

O-12 Security

Although the EveningStar is primarily controlled and operated by Bureau Aegis, the station's security is managed by Bureau Noir. The local head of Bureau Noir is Corporal Felix Yorgos (see pg. XXX), who routinely liaises with the various military intelligence agencies of the major powers who also operate through the EveningStar facilities.

Of particular note during the Alliance Summit is Saladin, the charismatic recreation who normally serves as a liaison between Haqqislam's army and Bureau Aegis. Saladin was instrumental in helping O-12 to claim the Black Box which led to first contact with the Tohaa, and he has used that fact to maneuver Haqqislam's interests into the spotlight during the negotiations. He has also placed himself as the primary liaison between the diplomatic agencies and Corporal Yorgos' operational forces, conveniently positioning himself as a central communication nexus for the Alliance Summit.

DAY ONE

The player characters have been ordered to report to Corporal Felix Yorgos on the EveningStar Orbital on Tuesday, August 30th, 66 NC. They may have worked together before or this may be their first O-12 assignment together, but in either case they should be familiar with the arrival of the Tohaa and the historic significance of what's happening on the station. (They are also likely to have received their Wilderness of Mirrors assignments for the operation, if any, before departing, although it is possible that some will be contacted after arriving on the station. Some of the assignments might even be important enough for a PC to be personally briefed by one of the six Human Sphere diplomats.)

As their shuttle approaches the EveningStar, read or summarize the following to them.

The EveningStar hangs before you like a great jewel silhouetted against the green and blue majesty of Paradiso. There is a huge amount of traffic cycling in and out of the seven disc-like landing bays that extend out from the station's spindle-waist and the Bureau Aegis traffic controllers are guiding you in on a tight beam. The huge bulk of the Tohaa Errant Ship juts out from the Corfu disc, but you are being authorized to land at the Cythera bays. Your shuttle slides smoothly under the tri-hulled Tohaa vessel as you spin in towards your designated docking berth.

Security Theater: After they land in the spacious (yet incredibly hectic) landing bay, they will be escorted through a rigorous security procedure: The digital signatures on their orders will be reconfirmed. Full-body medical scanners will be deployed. Their luggage will be passed through an isolated chamber filled with fractal manipulation limbs (which will open each piece of luggage, maneuver its contents into a three-dimensional volume, and then individually scan each item before returning them to the bag in their original configuration).

Minor Encounter: Aurelia Cardoso

At some point during their travails within the Cythera landing bay, one of the PCs will receive a ping on their comlog: An automatic sniffer (or possibly a friend in their social mesh) has just spotted their likeness on *Eye on the Sky*. Aurelia Cardoso is broadcasting from the far side of the landing bay and the PC has inadvertently appeared in the background of her shot.

This minor encounter establishes the flurry of reporters active on the EveningStar and helps to reinforce the momentous quality of what is happening around them. You can also use Cardoso's broadcast to establish additional exposition about the Tohaa, one or more of the Human Sphere diplomats, or anything else that seems useful.

Weapons Security

To get their weapons past security, the characters will need to make an appropriate D2 skill test (Stealth to conceal the weapons, Tech or Hack to bypass the scanners, or the like). Alternatively, they may be able to convince Corporal Yorgos to let them have their weapons back with a Persuade test (D2) in a later scene.

New Orders: Once they have been cleared through security, they will be briefly greeted by a diplomatic attaché who will report that Corporal Yorgos has requested their presence in the Silver Arch Sphere. Their comlogs will be updated with a public map of the EveningStar and their AR will helpfully display nav points for them.

Witnessing History

The interior of the EveningStar is like a cascade of bubbles, with each bubble a cleverly concealed compartment that can be sealed unto itself in the case of emergency depressurization.

The Silver Arch Sphere is located in one of the bubble hubs which the station is organized around. The hub itself is a spacious, multi-story area with overlapping balconies looking down into commons studded with commissaries and small stores. (It is a security nightmare, in case anyone is wondering.) Large circular doors lead from the bubble hub into the Silver Arch Sphere:

The Silver Arch Sphere is a huge dome bisected by silvery, beautifully nonsymmetrical arches. On the far side of the chamber a raised, oval dais stands before a massive, three story tall window which looks out over Paradiso and one of its twin suns. Hundreds of people are in the process of gathering here and, as you enter the Sphere, your AR helpfully indicates the seats that have been assigned to you near the back of the crowd.

Observation (D1): On a successful check, the PCs can spot the small Maya cameras flitting here and there as their operators discretely test out various angles. Characters who gain Momentum will recognize that some of the cameras are multilensed and watching the crowd as well as the stage.

Attention Please: The PCs may choose to poke around a bit, but there is not a lot of time. Most of the people there do not know what the announcement is going to be and the diplomats who do know all smile slyly when asked. Then the AR displays of everyone present (including the PCs) asks them to please take their seats.

A moment later, Corporal Yorgos (helpfully identified and flagged by their AR) will enter the room from a side chamber with a squad of Bureau Noir agents and

form a security corridor leading up to the stage. Once Yorgos gives the all-clear, the door opens again to admit Paradiso High Commissioner Natalia Hesse, the three Tohaa ambassadors, the six ambassadors of the Human Sphere, and a gaggle of lesser dignitaries.

A flurry of whispers scurries through the audience as High Commissioner Hesse steps up to the podium.

"It is with the greatest pleasure and highest honor that I step before you today to say that the promise of hope which I announced here less than a month ago has now been fulfilled. Our work here has not been without difficulty, but the diplomatic skill of our Tohaa comrades has helped us to persevere in the face of these travails. Each day we have gazed down upon the warzones of Paradiso and we have known that there is no time to spare and no effort that should not be given in joining our common interest in seeing the barbarity of the Combined Army driven from our worlds. And towards that end, we have reached a binding accord that will bring our two peoples under a common banner of justice. The Combined Army believes that they are strong in their treachery, but we will show them our strength in unity."

Final Words: What follows Hesse's historic address, unfortunately, is an utterly stultifying ceremony as one diplomat after another stands up to deliver speeches that are far too long and which all say variations of the same thing. Great opportunity. Momentous friendship. Inevitable destruction of the Combined Army. Yawns are stifled here and there. The audience shifts uncomfortably.

But then Ambassador Maara Seegur of the Tohaa rises from her seat. Although roughly similar to humanity in form, there is nonetheless something inherently different in the subtle movements of her body. Something of primal grace.

"Before sealing our pact, I would like to express my admiration and that of all my kind for the wisdom and determination shown by humanity in daring to send a friendship message through the spatial void to our race. We understand it is not easy to overcome the understandable mistrust that accompanies first contact with another species, especially with the dismal precedent of the Combined Army. We Tohaa know how to live up to such an action and we will meet the challenge of being loyal allies in the face of the threat that the Evolved Intelligence means for the entire galaxy. With the joint effort of both our races — brothers in arms, but also in spirit — we will be able to eradicate this evil that ruins the universe and, together, we will walk towards a future as bright as it is promising."

The other two Tohaa ambassadors step forward. They produce pens of golden ink and sign the treaty simultaneously in triplicate. The diplomats of the Human Sphere step forward and follow suit.

Humanity has formed its first alliance with an alien race.

Security Briefing

Once the ambassadors have safely exited the Silver Arch Sphere, Corporal Yorgos will approach the PCs. He apologizes for not being able to meet their shuttle, but he hopes they enjoyed sitting in on a slice of history. Then he will ask them to accompany him back to this office.

As they walk-and-talk, he will hit the key points of their briefing:

- Although the Contact Treaty has been signed, there is still a lot of work to be done. Dozens of diplomats are being shipped in for the Alliance Summit, a trinary conference in the Tohaa-style that will begin working out all the nitty-gritty details of the alliance.
- They have been brought to the EveningStar to serve as a roving security team. They will not be providing protection for a specific VIP or location, but will instead act as independent troubleshooters. They will serve as a sort of “security wild card” to cover the unexpected gaps and they will be on call to deal with minor security alerts.
- They will report directly to Corporal Yorgos, but their chain of command goes up through Ambassador Cullen’s office. The other Human Sphere ambassadors do not technically have any authority over them, but the PCs should show them (and their staff) every possible courtesy. “As for the Tohaa, standing orders are to treat them like little gods. This is a first date with a supermodel. You do not want to screw it up.”
- Their shift starts first thing in the morning. “You’ll find little purple pills in your quarters. Take the drugs. You’ll want to get synched to station time.”

During the briefing, Yorgos will freely answer any questions they might have. Once they reach his office, Yorgos will interrupt the briefing long enough to give them AR-encrypted security identification badges and station-approved Sidewinder stunners. Once the briefing is done, he will ping their comlogs with the location of their quarters and dismiss them.

Sidewinder Security Stunner

This combination of Taser and Light Pistol is designed to handle the light to medium threats that a station security patrol will normally encounter. The AR guidebook for the pistol suggests that firing a warning shot is unwise.

Function – Taser: Close Range, 1+4[CD] damage, Burst 1, 1-Handed, Close Quarters, Knockdown, Nonlethal, Stun

Function – Pistol: Close Range, 1+3[CD] damage, Burst 1, 1-Handed, Close Quarters, Alarmed

Corporal Felix Yorgos

Appearance: Greek-African with a dash of Arabic. Chiseled in face and body. His eyes are cybernetic implants with rotating haloes of gold and silver.

Quote: “Be smart about this and we can all get out of this happy.”

Roleplaying:

- Narrows his gaze while thinking about how to respond to a question.
- Friendly and personable, but never smiles.
- Rubs his left jaw fiercely when faced with a conundrum.

Background: Felix comes from a family of mudhoppers, bouncing around the Human Sphere while never really calling any planet home. After a cosmopolitan youth, he ended up fighting in the Neocolonial Wars, first for PanOceania, then for a variety of mercenary companies. After the Rio Negro Peace, he washed out on Paradiso. A few months later O-12 recruiters tracked him down at a beach house on the shores of Syldavia: They took one look at his pan-planetary resume and knew he was exactly the type of soldier they needed as they expanded in an effort to prevent another war.

Attributes											
Brawn						Agility		Awareness			
9						9		10			
Coordination		Intelligence				Willpower		Personality			
9		10				9		10			
Fields of Expertise											
Combat		Fortitude		Movement		Senses		Social		Technical	
EXP	FOC	EXP	FOC	EXP	FOC	EXP	FOC	EXP	FOC	EXP	FOC
+2	2	+2	2	+1	1	+2	2	+1	1		
Vigour		11	Resolve		11	Firewall		10	Soak		3

Notes: Soak 3 is from Bureau Noir Body armor over a reinforced skeleton.

Attacks : Sidewinder Security Stunner (see pg. XXX).

: Voice of Authority. 1+4[CD] Intimidation

DAY TWO

If the PCs take their purple pills, the nanonic medication will adjust their circadian rhythm and they will wake refreshed and ready to face the day. If they do not, they may suffer through varying degrees of fatigue while their body adjusts to station time.

Shortly after they wake up, however, an alarm is going to signal in their AR. There is a crisis that needs their attention. Trigger one of the day's minor investigations.

Minor Investigations

These minor investigations are meant to fill the players' daily routine. Most of them primarily provide local color and can probably be resolved in a single scene. Others might require them to dig a little deeper to unravel the problem, but still should not pose too much of a challenge.

The minor investigations do not need to be used in any particular order. Nor do they all need to be used before triggering *The Body* (see pg. XXX). You can continue introducing minor investigations as a way of complicating the player characters' investigation of the central mystery of the scenario.

It may also be appropriate to award an Infinity Point to whichever player character was most instrumental in resolving a minor investigation.

Playtest Tip: Bringing Back the Little Guy

It is likely that some of the characters encountered during these minor investigations will resonate strongly with your players: Maybe they befriend Saalleth Wilaancau, develop a crush on Karl Fielding, or truly revile the unctuous John Chapman. These things are hard to predict ahead of time, but you should keep an eye on which NPCs play strongly at your table and then find ways to reintroduce them after the Combined Army attack begins. (Some of them could even end up in the same crash coffin as the player characters.)

Jockeying for Position

There are reports of some sort of altercation in the PanOceanian block of diplomatic quarters. When the player characters arrive, they find that newly arrived PanOceanian diplomats are arguing fiercely about room assignments. Carmen Scardovi, an agricultural specialist from Acontecimento, feels that her seniority means that she should have a room closer to the Tohaa delegations. Karl Fielding, a trade negotiator from Neoterra, angrily refuses to be displaced. A hapless station steward named Bill Sanello is stuck between them.

- **Education (D1):** The diplomatic corps of Acontecimento and Neoterra use slightly different systems for ranking their civil servants. As a result, although Scardovi and Fielding are both DO5 employees (and, therefore, Scardovi's seniority would give her preferential placement), the reality is that Fielding's Neoterran DO5 ranking is higher than Scardovi's.
- **Persuade (D2):** Will convince either Scardovi or Fielding to back down.
- The player characters could also reach out to Scardovi's and Fielding's superior to resolve the situation. (Ambassador Lisa Díaz would probably be a bit of an overreach, but contacting a Deputy Chief of Mission would be easy enough.)

If the player characters are having trouble defusing the situation, feel free to have Scardovi throw a punch at Fielding. (Or vice versa.)

Catered Poisoning

A Tohaa diplomat named Saalleth Wilaancau abruptly falls ill and collapses. The other members of his triad — Taakalla Cavaali and Seleed Valnaala — hit the security alarm and the player characters get flagged. If they respond with alacrity, they will arrive at the triad's quarters shortly before the medical team does.

Wilaancau collapsed while eating the lunch that had been delivered from the bubble hub's kitchen, so poison is likely to be suspected.

Treating Wilaancau: A Medicine test (D1) easily confirms that a harmful biological substance has been introduced into Wilaancau's digestive tract. (Although the player characters may need to call up some emergency AR briefing packets on Tohaa physiology while performing their examination.) Wilaancau can be revived with a Medicine test (D2), otherwise she will recover under the ministrations of the medical team.

Questioning Wilaancau: If Wilaancau is revived, she can be questioned.

- She had been in her quarters for at least an hour before collapsing. During that time she was researching her commission meetings for the afternoon or next day. (She will gesture towards a Tohaa data terminal on the desk.)
- Like many of the Tohaa, she is staying on the station because it is more convenient than the Errant Ship for the commission's business.
- She can think of no reason why anyone would want her dead.
- Earlier in the day, during a meeting of a Technological Exchange subcommittee, a Nomad diplomat named Ryuto Cutler became physically aggressive during negotiations regarding the protocols under which technology would be shared between the Tohaa and the Human Sphere.

Ryuto Cutler: Cutler is a fiery-tempered man of Japanese and Swedish descent. His father defected from Yu Jing and settled on the *Bakunin* where he met Cutler's mother. Ryuto grew up on a diet of political diatribes and *The Open Manifesto*.

He is also a complete red herring. He believes fervently that any technology which the Tohaa give to the Human Sphere should be made publicly available and placed under an open license. Yes, he aggressively pushed for his beliefs to the point of becoming physically agitated. But he had nothing to do with poisoning Wilaancau and can alibi himself quite effectively: He was in committee meetings during the time that Wilaancau's meal was prepared and consumed.

Scenario Threads: Technology Exchange Commission

The Technological Exchange is the same commission that Edmund Alinari is working on. Wilaancau and her triad are serving on the commission's plenary committee with Alinari and it would not be difficult to involve them or Ryuto Cutler in the murder investigation.

Tracking the Meal: Wilaancau's meal was prepared in the kitchen that services the bubble hub her quarters are located in. It was delivered by an automated drone, and the footage from that drone can be reviewed to confirm that no one tampered with the food en route.

Questioning the Kitchen Staff: The player characters can question everyone in the kitchen from the line cooks to the head chef, but they are not going to turn up any political extremists.

- Nobody can recall anyone strange hanging around the kitchens.
- Most of them will be horrified that Wilaancau became ill. They have been working very hard to make sure that the Tohaa's dietary needs are met!
- Some might actually complain about the long, hard hours they have been putting in learning Tohaa cuisine. Not to mention all the strange ingredients they have had to stock their larder with.
- With the new inrush of diplomats for the Alliance Summit, things have gotten even more hectic. With the station's guest facilities near capacity and all the formal dinners celebrating the Contact Treaty, the kitchen staff are having to pull a lot of extra shifts.

Investigating the Kitchen: As long as the player characters do not get in the way of the ongoing food preparation, the cooks do not object to them poking around. (There is no way the cooks could really stop them, of course, but that would not stop them from bitterly complaining about the inconvenience.)

- **Observation (D2):** To notice that, in the kitchen's rush to deal with their overworked schedule, the cooks are getting careless. Surfaces are not being properly cleaned. Ingredients are getting mixed together.
- **Science (D1):** A scan of the kitchen confirms that some of the Tohaa ingredients have been cross contaminated with dill. Which, it turns out, the Tohaa are extremely allergic to.

If the player characters like, they can check the security footage from the kitchen and confirm that the dill was, in fact, accidentally spilled into Tohaa food supplies. This is very time-consuming to do manually, or a Hacking test (D1) can set up a simple search algorithm that will pinpoint the moment.

Lost Baggage

The players get flagged when a Priority 8 emergency signal is triggered from the diplomatic quarters. When they respond, however, they find no signs of a crisis. Instead they find an Ariadnan diplomat named John Chapman who is upset because one of his bags is missing.

The Bag: Chapman's bag was accidentally tagged with two nanonic labels. As a result, it was delivered to the rooms of Kostya Bomolov, another member of the Ariadnan diplomatic team.

It is relatively trivial to track down the current location of the bag and the player characters should be able to accomplish it using any number of methods: Hacking can track the bag's path and identify it as having been double-tagged. Security footage can be checked. In fact, Chapman's nanonic baggage tags can be actively queried and immediately identify the location of the errant bag.

The Contraband: Chapman is so insistent about retrieving his luggage because it holds his stash of diamond eight, an Ariadnan pharma-narcotic. An Observation test (D1) while searching the bag turns up the stash.

Diamond 8

Diamond 8 is a mild sedative that can easily become airborne if improperly handled. (The contact high in large groups is part of what makes it so popular.) If the characters have accumulated Heat at this point, they could easily become exposed. 2 Heat will cause a character to feel euphoric and receive the Dazed condition for a scene. 4 Heat means that the character's clothing has become contaminated with the drug, making them "infectious" to other NPCs (particularly Tohaa).

Dead Drop Reporting

While patrolling the EveningStar, a player making a successful Observation test (D1) spots a mysterious package taped to the bottom of a bench in the common area of a bubble hub.

The Package: The package is a data module attached to the underside of the bench by surgical tape. The module contains footage from a number of closed committee meetings along with classified schedules for upcoming summit meetings.

- **Hacking (D3):** The schedules are widely disseminated among summit participants and there are no common attendees among the recorded committee meetings. A particularly deep pattern analysis of the data, however, reveals that there *is* a single member of the summit who uniquely had access to those schedules *and* was present in each of the committee rooms at some point during the meetings or at some point four hours prior to the meetings: Saul Brankovic. (Reduce the difficulty by one if the player characters think to cross-reference security footage from the committee rooms. Reduce the difficulty again if the player characters explicitly hypothesize that it may have been someone in the committee rooms before the meetings started.)

Playtest Tip: Bomb Threat

If the player characters jump to the conclusion that the package is some sort of explosive, let them. Notify the bomb squad, evacuate the area, cause a moderate panic. They will not receive an official reprimand when it turns out no explosives were present (better safe than sorry). However, it is likely that the contents of the package will be destroyed. And Aurelia Cardoso, obviously, will not come anywhere near the area.

Observing the Dead Drop: The player characters can observe the dead drop location in one of two ways. First, they can access security footage of the area to observe the location in the past. Second, they can leave the package *in situ* and set up surveillance to catch whoever comes to pick up the package.

In either case, it requires an Observation test (D2) to spot the person involved: A diplomat named Saul Brankovic makes the drop. Aurelia Cardoso retrieves it.

Saul Brankovic: Brankovic is a low-ranking PanOceanian diplomatic aide working primarily as a researcher for the Military Communications Commission. He is disgruntled about being repeatedly passed over for promotion and Cardoso was able to convince him that all the secrecy surrounding the Summit Alliance was not in the public interest. If he is backed into a corner, he will try to justify his actions by claiming that none of the material he turned over would

have compromised national security. (Which is mostly true unless the diplomatic schedules fell into the hands of a would-be assassin.)

Aurelia Cardoso: Cardoso has been covering the Tohaa story for *Eye on the Sky* (a Maya investigative aggregate) since their Errant Ship first arrived at the EveningStar. She does not have any sort of dark agenda. She is just an intrepid reporter doing whatever it takes to get her story.

If Cardoso feels particularly threatened by the player characters and has the opportunity to do so, she will call in an old favor. PanOceanian Ambassador Lisa Díaz will show up shortly thereafter and apply whatever pressure is necessary to get Cardoso cut loose. If the player characters push back, they can probably get Cardoso banned from the EveningStar, but that is about the limit of what they can hope to achieve.

Playtest Tip: Paranoia

It is okay if the player characters never figure out who is behind the dead drop. Once Edmund Alinari's body shows up they might even assume it is part of a larger conspiracy that somehow involves the dead drop. (They are half right.)

Drunk and Disorderly

The player characters receive a report of someone dancing in the public fountains of the Shukri Sphere. They find Lukas Zolnerowich, the husband of a minor PanOceanian diplomat named Augustus, drunk as a skunk and challenging passersby to a splashing contest with nebulous rules.

There is nothing particularly surprising to Zolnerowich's story: There have been a huge number of dinners and parties on the EveningStar celebrating the signing of the Tohaa Contact Treaty and the beginning of the Alliance Summit. He overindulged.

It should not be difficult to talk Zolnerowich out of the fountain and see him safely escorted back to his quarters, where his grateful husband will take custody of him.

AR Migraines

A coordination meeting of the Yu Jing delegation serving on the Military Communications Commission is disrupted when the delegates are abruptly stricken with near-crippling headaches. Many of them also become nauseous and begin vomiting. The sudden onset of their symptoms trips an alarm warning of a potential hazardous chemical leak.

Evacuation: By the time the player characters arrive, most of the Yu Jing delegation has fled the conference room and are crowding the hallway. The soft-yet-fierce klaxon of the chemical alarm, accompanied by Melissa's largely-ignored instructions, are accompanied by the roar of panicked people in pain.

A few people, however, were actually knocked unconscious. Some of them were carried out of the conference room, but at least two others remain inside. The player characters' first priority should be getting those people out of the potential danger zone.

Investigation: The conference room is a disaster. Chairs are overturned. Personal effects and electronic devices are scattered across the floor. The acrid stench of vomit hangs in the air.

- **Science (D1):** To discover that there is no chemical contaminant present in the conference room.
- **Medicine (D1):** There is nothing medically wrong with the Yu Jing delegates.
- **Hacking (D1):** Characters who suspect that there might be something wrong with the Maya network will quickly discover that the local AR protocols appear to have been corrupted. Momentum will allow a hacker to backtrack the problem and reveal that the corruption is the result of

software engineers trying to create a system compatible with Tohaa AR protocols.

Afflicted: At the GM's discretion, a player character interacting with their AR interface in the conference room may become afflicted by the migraine effect. If they fail a Resistance test (D2), they become Staggered.

Jiro Li: Attaché Specialist Jiro Li was not present in the conference room when the affliction occurred, but he arrived onsite almost immediately. (Probably before the player characters got there, and certainly by the time they emerge from the conference room carrying the unconscious diplomats.) Li will demand to be part of the investigation into the "brutal assault" on the "noble representatives" of Yu Jing. He will be quick to accuse PanOceania, O-12, the Nomads, and any other target of convenience and demand that immediate action be taken against them. In short, he will be a massive, bureaucratic pain in the ass. (If the player characters end up wanting to punch him in the nose, you are doing it right.)

The Body

A Priority 8 emergency signal is triggered from one of the PanOceanian blocks of diplomatic quarters. When the player characters arrive onsite, they find a PanOceanian diplomat named Artemio Nespola leaning up against the wall next to the door leading to Edmund Alinari's quarters. Artemio is in shock and, at first, all he can really say is, "He's dead. He's really dead." While gesturing vaguely towards the door.

As the player characters enter the room, read or summarize the following to them:

You are entering one of the premiere diplomatic quarters onboard the EveningStar. The carpet is soft and plush under your feet. A beautiful painting of Paradiso's twin suns hangs in a gilt-edged frame. The walls scroll with a muted kaleidoscope of decorative designs in tones of green and damp-earth brown.

And a knife juts up grotesquely from the chest of the corpse carelessly sprawled across the King-sized bed.

A quick ID check confirms that the body belongs to Edmund Alinari, the diplomat these quarters are assigned to.

Artemio Nespola

Appearance: A broad, friendly face of smooth, flat planes. He wears a slightly rumpled suit with his tie undone.

Quote: "I just... I can't believe he's just dead like that."

Roleplaying:

- Wide-eyed and slightly slack-jawed until he starts pulling himself together.
- If his sense of duty or responsibility is invoked, he will take a deep breath and focus.
- Nervously drums the thumb of his left hand nervously against his fingers.

Background: Artemio is a biotechnology specialist who has been called in to serve as an expert resource for the PanOceanian diplomatic delegation at the Alliance Summit. He grew up in Runenberg on Paradiso and works there today at the Knott Institute, a small biotechnology contractor.

Key Info:

- Artemio has been working with Alinari on the Technology Exchange Commission. Alinari missed the afternoon session of the plenary committee and Artemio volunteered to fetch him at the first break.
- Artemio found Alinari's door unlocked. He saw the body as soon as he entered the room and immediately triggered a security alarm.

- He felt like he was going to throw up and ran back into the hall. He did not disturb anything in the room and does not remember touching anything.
- Artemio is just a low-ranking functionary on the committee. He does not actually know Alinari personally. He has only been working with him for a few days.
- **Persuade (D1):** If asked about Alinari's recent associates, Artemio will initially say that he is not really sure, Alinari's work brings him in contact with dozens of people. (Artemio does not want to get anybody in trouble.) If he is pushed on the issue, a successful Persuade check will name Sareelia Mogaal and one of the other DNA suspects of the GM's choice per Momentum gained.

Info-Quarantine

As soon as the player characters contact Corporal Yorgos about Alinari's murder, he will contact the human ambassadors and brief them. They will decide to slap an info-quarantine on the death: The Alliance Summit is too important to potentially derail. In order to maintain the tightest security possible, the player characters are given sole responsibility for investigating the murder (although, of course, all material aid possible will be afforded them). They are particularly cautioned from allowing any journalists to get their hands on the story.

Background: Edmund Alinari

Edmund Alinari was a PanOceanian diplomat working on the Technology Exchange Commission. He was raised Catholic on Neoterra, but has not been to a church service in years. If the players dig into his background, they will find that he has been on a fast-track career in the PanOceanian diplomatic corps for the past six years. He has collected a small constellation of speeding tickets on every planet he has been assigned to and an Education test (D2) digs up a misdemeanor for soliciting a prostitute on Acontecimento that he seems to have gotten buried.

Alinari has been on the EveningStar Orbital since the beginning of August. During the Tohaa Contact Treaty negotiations he was serving as a personal aide for Ambassador Díaz, but once the Alliance Summit started he was spun out to become a senior member of the Technology Exchange Commission.

Alinari's Schedule: Alinari's comlog has been wiped by a virus (see *Security Footage*, pg. XXX), but the players should be able to reconstruct his schedule over the last several days. It is mostly a dizzying array of meetings setting up the Technology Exchange Commission and various committee meetings. It turns out he was in the Silver Arch Sphere with the player characters during the signing of the Tohaa Contact Treaty.

There are, however, a handful of private meetings. These should point the players at Sareelia Mogaal and one or two of the other DNA suspects (of the GM's choice).

Playtest Tip: Finding Himura

Ideally, the player characters' investigation into Alinari's murder will last until *Day Three*. Most of their investigative options should chew up copious amounts of time (either waiting for Ambassador Dai to meet with them, performing exhaustive data surveys, lining up interviews, or the like) and you can also use minor investigations to distract and occupy them. If they find a clever way to solve the mystery quicker than that, that is okay: Himura's corpse is waiting for them either way.

The Knife

Any trained inspection of Alinari's corpse will confirm that the stab wound was the sole cause of death.

- **Medicine (D1):** Alinari was standing when he was stabbed and fell directly back onto the bed. The attack itself was precise, with the blade striking directly into Alinari's heart. (He would have died almost instantly from the wound.) There are no signs of a struggle and no additional wounds on the body. (1 Momentum will show that the strike was a diagonal thrust from below, indicating that the attacker was either kneeling or shorter than the victim.)
- **Education (D1):** To identify the knife as an Antipode ceremonial blade.

Tracking the Knife: The knife would have needed to be checked through baggage security when it was brought onto the EveningStar. If the logs are checked, the player characters can easily confirm that an Antipode ceremonial blade was brought onto the station as part of the Yu Jing baggage. Unfortunately, all the Yu Jing baggage receives a single tracking code and is then sorted out by the staff.

If the player characters follow up with the Yu Jing delegation, they will get bounced around the bureaucracy for two hours before finally seeking an audience with Ambassador Dai Ming in order to get the necessary authorization to identify whose bag had the knife in it. (A Persuade test (D0) can reduce the wait by 20 minutes per Momentum.)

Ambassador Dai Ming

Appearance: She affects a dynasty suit — the Yu Jing fashion which infuses the lines of a modern suit with the richly colored, silk embroidery of ancient Chinese nobility. Streams of jet black descend from her three-tiered hairstyle to below her waist.

Quote: “Honor is often set in contrast to practicality, but there is nothing more practical than the debts that we owe and that we are owed.”

Roleplaying:

- Arches her left eyebrow.
- Gives a small smile when she is amused. And also when she is enraged.
- Maintains a frosty distance from anyone who is not Yu Jing.

Background: Dai Ming was born the bastard daughter of a member of the Qing family. This did not embitter her. Rather, she cultivated a deep understanding of the importance of honoring duty in a right and proper society. When she came of age, her estranged father quietly assured her placement in the diplomatic corps and she worked her way quickly and efficiently up to her present position.

Key Info: The Antipode knife belonged to Sora Himura.

DNA Sweep

Performing a DNA sweep on Alinari’s quarters will identify samples from Alinari, Nespola, and three other people: Bhaltair McClellan, Ilari Giehl, and Gudrun Vastag. It will also turn up Tohaa DNA belonging to Sareelia Mogaal.

These four individuals (plus Nespola) are likely to be the primary suspects for the players. (None of them are actually guilty, but do not let that dissuade them.) It should not be difficult to line up interviews with any of them.

The sweep does not turn up any DNA for Sora Himura because she was never actually there. (And the Shasvastii do not tend to leave gene sequences lying around for people to analyze.)

Sareelia Mogaal

Appearance: Sareelia appears to have half-grasped human sexuality and cultivated a personal style to match. Loose emerald robes drape low, revealing a tight corset woven from brass and forest green leather. A skirt of dark green has been slit up either leg to her waist.

Quote: “Finding and adapting to each new world, to each new sun, to the ecologies and biorhythms of unknown planets. It all entails a transformation of the self.”

Roleplaying:

- Sareelia’s exploration of human sexuality lies somewhere between vamping and *femme fatale*.
- Once she learns the data satchel is missing, she will become panicky.
- She uses her pheromones to fill the air with the scent of rose petals.

Background: Sareelia was born aboard an Errant Ship. She grew up in the tattered remnants of a glorious tradition of bold exploration. Her actual life has been defined by the seemingly endless war against the Combined Army: The Errant Ships have withdrawn from the frontiers to maximize their chances of survival and Sareelia’s own life seemed somehow lessened by their meekness. Participating in the Alliance Summit is the bold adventure that she has always felt is her birthright.

Key Info:

- Sareelia worked with Alinari and Bhaltair McClellan on the Technology Exchange Commission. They had been working to establish an alternative channel of negotiation outside the normal committees. (There is nothing sinister about this. Having these channels can be very useful when official positions stagnate or roadblock.)
- She had also worked with Alinari during the negotiations on the Tohaa Contact Treaty.
- Earlier today, she gave him a Tohaa data satchel that contained specifications and gene-profiles for the Voorne (the symbionts which form Tohaa battle armor). Once she knows of Alinari’s death, she would like the data satchel returned immediately.

Playtest Tip: Enter Sareelia

Although there are other methods by which the player characters can identify Sora Himura as Alinari’s murderer, an important revelation in their investigation is the theft of the Tohaa data satchel. If the player characters have not already approached her, Sareelia Mogaal will track them down around midnight in order to retrieve the data satchel.

Bhaltair McClellan

Appearance: A boisterous, round-bellied man with thick red hair that tumbles down into a beard that threatens (but does not quite succumb to) unruly excess.

Quote: “You should take a load off, mate. And have a drink. It won’t bring him back, but it’ll keep us all sane.”

Roleplaying:

- A loud and hearty laugh that comes easily.
- Somehow finds a way to use elaborate metaphors featuring Ariadnan ales regardless of the actual topic of conversation.
- Likes to slap people on the back. (If it stings, you know he likes you. If it is hard enough to make you lose your balance, you know he does not.)

Background: Bhaltair is Ariadnan of Caledonian stock. When he was just a young kid, his father went off to fight in a bloody frontier conflict between Caledonia and Rodina. He never came back. Bhaltair made a pledge that he would work to never see his homeworld torn apart by such senseless violence again. He became a politician and quickly discovered how difficult the dream of peace can be. When the Human Sphere returned to Ariadna, he was at first overjoyed at how it unified the planet... and then watched in horror as the Commercial Conflicts ripped his planet apart again. He lost himself in drink for a time and then, concluding that the only way to bring true peace to Ariadna was to solve the off-planet problems that were manifesting themselves there, he became a diplomat. He did not participate in the negotiation of the Tohaa Contact Treaty, but he has recently arrived to take part in the Alliance Summit.

Key Info:

- Although he is a fresh arrival on the EveningStar, Bhaltair had worked with Alinari a few years back when they were both stationed on Shentang together.
- Alinari roped him into working with a Tohaa named Sareelia Mogaal. They all work on the Technology Exchange Commission together and Alinari wanted to open up an “alternative channel of negotiation”.
- Alinari has been having an affair with Gudrun Vastag.

Ilari Giehl

Appearance: Cold, snow-white hair slick against his porcelain pale scalp. Piercing blue eyes like a sea at storm.

Quote: "I'm not really at liberty to discuss that."

Roleplaying:

- Steeples his fingers.
- Speaks with a soft, slow voice.
- Quick to anger, but will never show it.

Background: Giehl's maternal grandmother was a Maya star on Neoterra. His family saw just enough of the money to give him a taste of real wealth, but not enough to actually make him personally wealthy. After bouncing around disconsolately through a number of prep schools, Giehl landed a position with the PanOceanian diplomatic corps. He is assigned to the Military Communications Commission.

Key Info:

- He and Edmund came up through the ranks together on Neoterra.
- Edmund invited him back to his quarters last night and they shared a celebratory drink to welcome Ilari to the station.
- They got together for lunch earlier today and Edmund was bragging about having scored the Tohaa data satchel. Ilari does not know where he got it from but, "It was quite the coup." (Ilari is professionally jealous and incredibly bitter about it. Alinari was always casually one-upping him and this was just another example of it.)
- He knows that Alinari has been working closely with Bhaltair McClellan.

Gudrun Vastag

Appearance: A beauty that reminds one of an ice sculpture, with large blue eyes that easily fill with tears.

Quote: “No... no... That’s impossible. He can’t be dead. He just can’t be!”

Roleplaying:

- Gudrun puts up a brave fight to hold herself together, but Alinari’s death shakes her severely.
- Will not easily admit her affair with Alinari.
- Her lower lip quivers prettily when she is upset.

Background: Gudrun is a Paradiso native. She escaped the Combined Army during the evacuation of Fuyan, where was working as a diplomatic aide, and eventually emigrated to Nirvana, where she now lives with her husband. She is here on the EveningStar as a junior aide on Ambassador Díaz’ staff.

Key Info:

- She and Alinari were having an affair. They first met during the negotiation of the Tohaa Contact Treaty. He swept her off her feet with a series of hopelessly romantic gifts.
- She was in Alinari’s room for the obvious reason, but she will claim to have been consulting with him on Ambassador Díaz’ orders. (That story will not check out.)
- Alinari had called her earlier today and told her he could not see her that night because of some sort of business with Sareelia Mogaal. (Alinari was planning to spend the night studying the Tohaa data satchel, but he did not tell Gudrun that.)

Security Footage

Checking the local surveillance records is not immediately fruitful. They show Alinari entering his room, and then five minutes later they were wiped out for a period of three hours by a computer virus.

- **Observation (D2):** To notice that Alinari is carrying a Tohaa data satchel as he enters his room. (The satchel is not to be found in his room.)

Tracking the Virus: The assassin covered their digital tracks pretty thoroughly, but with enough perseverance the player characters may be able to follow the lead.

- **Hacking (D1):** Identifies the trigger code that was used to activate the virus. The code was “Roshnii” and the virus originated from a common terminal in one of the conference rooms being used by the Alliance Summit.
- **Education (D2):** Identifies “Roshnii” as a Shasvastii word that can be loosely translated as “unleashing the panic”.

Dozens of people have used that conference room in just the last day, so the common terminal is probably a dead end. If the player characters analyze all the encrypted wireless traffic in that conference room and compare it to the known trigger code they are looking for — requiring a Hacking test (D2) and several hours of work — they can eventually identify Sora Himura as the person who loaded the virus into the system.

Tohaa Data Satchel

Once the players figure out that a Tohaa data satchel was taken from Alinari’s room by his killer, they will probably want to track it down.

Security Footage: Although the surveillance data in the immediate vicinity of Alinari’s room was wiped out, the player characters can check the footage of people *leaving* the blackout area. There are hundreds of people, but there is only one carrying a Tohaa satchel: Sora Himura.

- **Observation (D1):** If the players do not think to narrow their search and instead try to survey all of the surveillance data in the sphere, a successful Observation test still notices Himura leaving the surveillance blackout. On a failure, there are hundreds of people on the EveningStar carrying Tohaa data satchels (albeit most of them Tohaa).

Canvassing the Diplomats: Another option is to simply canvass the area while asking questions about the data satchel.

- **Persuade (D1):** A diplomatic attaché named Roy Benson remembers seeing Sora Himura carrying a Tohaa data satchel in the vicinity of Alinari’s room shortly after the murder.

DAY THREE

As their third day on the EveningStar Orbital dawns, the player characters should be close to identifying Sora Himura as Edmund Alinari's murderer. Depending on how things have gone, you might still have a couple of minor investigations left for them to tangle with.

Once they have identified Sora Himura as their suspect, the next logical course of action will be to confront and arrest her. Pinging Melissa will indicate that Himura is in her room, but that the internal sensors in the room have been manually placed in privacy mode.

The Sad Fate of Sora Himura

As the player characters enter Sora Himura's room, read or summarize the following to them.

The air in the room is chilled several degrees below station normal. It makes your skin prickle. An acrid smell that you cannot quite place hangs in the air. A large chest of silver-grey plastic chews up most of the real estate in the room that is not occupied by either the bed or the desk. Across the headboard of the bed and the wall behind it, there is a spray of dried blood and coagulated gore.

Blood Spray: The Shasvastii Speculo Killer shot Sora Himura in the head at close range.

- **Medicine (D1):** The blood is three days old.
- **Observation (D1) / Ballistics (D1):** To find the Shasvastii bullet buried in the headboard of the bed. An Education test (D2) or Intelligence-based Ballistics test (D1) can identify the bullet as having been shot from a Shasvastii assault pistol.

Freezer Chest: Inside the chest is Sora Himura's body. The chest itself is a primitive freezer unit, designed to keep the body preserved so that the Speculo Killer could continue taking genetic samples from it.

- **Medicine (D1):** Assuming that the body has been kept on ice, it has been dead at least three days. The obvious head wound was the cause of death, but Himura's Cube and comlog have also been removed. Additional wounds have been inflicted on the legs — medical puncture wounds that appear to have been used to draw marrow from the leg bones.
- **Medicine (D2):** There are vestigial nanonic Shasvastii medical probes left in the wounds.
- **Education (D2, D1 if medical probes are detected):** The wounds on the leg are consistent with the practice of Shasvastii Speculo Killers for gaining the genetic materials they need to assume a victim's identity.

Searching the Room: Simura's luggage was unpacked into the closet. Her toiletries are neatly laid out in the bathroom. The Tohaa data satchel stolen from Edmund Alinari can be found in one of the desk drawers.

Background: Sora Himura

Sora Himura was a Yu Jing ambassadorial aide working on the Subcommittee for Embassy Affairs (which was responsible for coordinating the logistics involved in setting up a Tohaa embassy on Paradiso).

Himura grew up on Yutang. She is survived by her mother and younger sister. Her scholastic records were impeccable, but unremarkable. Her career in the Yu Jing diplomatic corps shows a similarly unblemished record of work, polite compliments from her superiors, and absolutely nothing of particular note.

She was, in the grand scheme of things, remarkably unimportant. The perfect cog in a society that prizes its clockwork precision. And that, ultimately, made her the perfect target for a Speculo Killer looking for a useful face that could be worn around the EveningStar.

Tohaa Data Satchel

The Tohaa data satchel is a high-security biotech data storage device. Sareelia Mogaal, Saalleth Wilaancau, or another Tohaa could probably be persuaded to give the player characters access to it. Otherwise they will have to hack their way into the satchel before they can analyze its contents.

This particular data satchel contains the specifications and gene-profiles for the Voorne, which are the symbionts that form most Tohaa battle armor. Because they are biotechnology based on symbiosis, the Voorne are not immediately useful to humanity, but it is likely that this type of symbiont technology could be adapted to human genomics (or vice versa). In the hands of the Shasvastii, this data is potentially dangerous because it can be used to identify potential weaknesses in the current iteration of Voorne armor (which is constantly being adapted in a biotech arms race against Shasvastii toxins).

Hacking (D1): To determine that the satchel's firewall has been breached and its data drained. Distinctive code fragments can be retrieved which identify the attack as being Shasvastii in origin.

Tohaa Data Satchel

Firewall 3. Shield 1. The satchel lacks wireless access as a security feature and must be physically accessed in order to hack it. It has been breached previously and this will be obvious to any hacker who attempts to bypass the firewall.

The Tohaa Ambassador

Unless the player characters lock down all knowledge about the Shasvastii involvement in the murders of Sora Himura and Edmunda Alinari, the revelation will shoot its way up the chain of command. All the major ambassadors — human and Tohaa alike — will be notified almost immediately.

Playtest Tip: Spreading the Shasvastii Panic

Ideally, Ambassador Maara Seegur will get word of the Shasvastii involvement in time to visit Sora Himura's quarters while the player characters are still performing their investigation there. If she does not, then she might request a first-hand viewing of the evidence there.

One way to ensure that Ambassador Seegur receives quick notification is for Corporal Yorgos to accompany the player characters when they go to arrest Himura. As soon as the word "Shasvastii" gets whispered, he will immediately send up the red flag to the ambassadors. He can also tell the player characters to sit tight because they have "got a guest coming in".

Ambassador Maara Seegur of the Tohaa, in particular, will want a personal debriefing from the player characters regarding their investigation. A single Speculo Killer at the Alliance Summit is capable of wreaking catastrophic damage. (If she knew how many Shasvastii were currently active on the EveningStar, her phero blossom would probably fall off.)

Unless the player characters do something to seriously piss her off, Ambassador Seegur will request that the player characters remain in sole charge of the investigation. With a Speculo Killer involved, it is impossible to know who can be trusted. (The player characters get the benefit of the doubt because they are the ones who brought the threat to light in the first place.)

The Warning: During their meeting with Ambassador Seegur, a message will appear upon the wall of Himura's quarters. Scrawled in glowing, purple Tohaa characters directly above the blood spray, it can be translated as, "Death to Maara Seegur."

- **Science (D1):** Determines that the appearance of the message was triggered by Ambassador Maara's baade (the pheromonal signature which is unique to every individual Tohaa).

This gauche bit of melodrama is deliberate: The Roshnii code has been received and the Shasvastii's goal has shifted from sly infiltration to the instillation of open panic.

In the wake of this warning, Corporal Yorgos will immediately reassign the player characters to serve as an additional protective element on Ambassador

Seegur. A Persuade test (D1), however, can convince him to let them (or some of them) continue their investigation of the Speculo Killer, if that is what they want.

Ambassador Maara Seegur

Appearance: Wide eyes of molten gold smile from beneath brows of flawless, porcelain perfection. Her crimson-tinged phero blossom is slightly upturned, creating a halo of rose fire. Flowing, layered robes of blue and cream fall around a lithe and graceful body.

Quote: “I have found them to be bloodthirsty advocates of secrecy, capable of the worst acts imaginable.”

Roleplaying:

- Seegur has the personality of a playful mother cat. (But make sure you do not try to take away her kittens.)
- A soft and gentle smile.
- With those she perceives as equals she is affable and open to negotiation; but if she sees you as an underling, she will harden fast against any opposition or contradiction.

Background: Most humans look at Ambassador Seegur and assume her to be a woman in her mid- to late-thirties. This is deceptive. She is, in fact, nearly one hundred years old. She is currently the tri-captain of the Errant Ship *Melodious Strength*, which is something doubly misunderstood by most humans: First, the *Melodious Strength* might be more literally translated as *Reinforcing Scents That Presage the Arrival of the Gaarga Triad* — it is a name which invokes a predator in motion, not the harmonies of an opera. Second, the triad that most human authorities think of as the commander of an Errant Ship — which translations often misidentify as the “captain” of the vessel — is better understood as serving as the ambassadors’ military attaché.

Maara Seegur was born on an Errant Ship, but when she was an adolescent she was severed from her sororal triad and sent to study at the Higher Academy of Diplomatic Studies in Bireeta City. (This imposition of traumatizing isolation is deliberate. Those who survive the transition are tempered like steel. Those who do not were never suited to become Tohaa diplomats in the first place.) During her early days at the Academy she formed a strong triad with Paanil Commaara. The third member of their triad shifted frequently until they formed an unconventional bond with Susuyil Cavalla, a senior instructor at the Academy.

The Seecomca triad came to the *Melodious Strength* and rose rapidly through its command ranks. During the Fall of Dameega to the EL, however, the *Melodious Strength* was horrendously damaged and massive casualties — including Susuyil Cavalla — were suffered. During the chaos of their desperate and isolated retreat, Naaz Engooril — a Makaul commander who ended up being the senior Trident officer aboard the *Melodius Strength* — joined the triad. The Seecomca triad was, thus, completely unorthodox and yet, forged together by the blood of Dameega, it worked.

Maara Seegur

Attributes											
Brawn						Agility			Awareness		
9						8			10		
Coordination		Intelligence				Willpower			Personality		
8		10				10			11		
Fields of Expertise											
Combat		Fortitude		Movement		Senses		Social		Technical	
EXP	FOC	EXP	FOC	EXP	FOC	EXP	FOC	EXP	FOC	EXP	FOC
+1		+1	1	+1		+2	2	+3	3	+1	
Vigour		10	Resolve		12	Firewall		11	Soak		3

Notes: Soak 3 is from Tohaa Symbiotic Armour.

Tracking the Shasvastii

Surveillance footage of the corridor outside Sora Himura's quarters show "Sora Himura" entering the empty room with the Tohaa data satchel shortly after Edmund Alinari's estimated time of death. About twenty minutes after Alinari's body was found, a completely different person leaves the room.

The New Face: Trying to identify the "new face" of the Speculo Killer (through facial recognition or the like) is a dead end. The new face is either a unique construction of the Shasvastii or plucked from some anonymous resident of Paradiso. It does not belong to any of the diplomatic staff or station personnel on the EveningStar.

If they use station surveillance footage to follow the Speculo Killer's new face, however, it will lead them to a maintenance closet on Level 2 of the Spindle. The footage shows the Speculo Killer entering the maintenance closet. She does not leave it.

Backtracking Sora: Backtracking "Sora Himura" through the security footage will also lead to the maintenance closet.

Shasvastii Preparation Nest

At first glance, the maintenance closet appears empty: Cleaning 'bots are docked in recharging stations. Various cleaning supplies are stored on the shelves. There is a drainage sink with various signs indicating that it is rated for the disposal of dangerous chemicals.

Observation (D3, D1 if actively searching): The back wall of the maintenance closet is a holographic projection. You can just walk straight through it. (This

discovery could also be made by comparing the maintenance closet to the station blueprints, for example.)

Once the player characters pass through the holographic wall, read or summarize the following:

Beyond the false wall the original back end of the maintenance closet has been transformed. Some sort of alien device has been affixed to the opposite wall. There is a small work table covered with tools and parts off to your left, with a number of handguns hanging on the wall directly above it. The wall to your right is covered with paper charts covered with bizarre and incomprehensible pictograms and diagrams.

Shasvastii Data Terminal: The alien device on the back wall is a Shasvastii data terminal and communications array. If the terminal can be successfully accessed, additional Hacking checks can be used to analyze the data on it.

- **Hacking (Skilled):** Any hacker can see that the communications array recently received an emergency code signal consisting of a single word: “Roshnii”.
- **Education (D2):** Identifies “Roshnii” as a Shasvastii word that can be loosely translated as “unleashing the panic”.
- **Hacking (D1):** The Shasvastii have only managed to compromise some of the lower security data systems on the EveningStar. Most recently, the diplomatic schedule of Ambassador Maara Seegur was downloaded.
- **Hacking (D2):** The device has multiple log-on accounts. It was being used by more than one Shasvastii agent.
- **Tech (D2) / Hacking (D3):** The communications array clearly has the capability of sending powerful signals in burst packets to the surface of Paradiso. However, it also has a secondary communication relay that is only useful for sending stealthed signals over short distances. There appear to be at least eight other communication nodes on the EveningStar, although their location cannot be pinpointed from this terminal.

Shasvastii Data Terminal

Firewall 8, Reactive system (Hacking 11), Sword 1+5[CD]. If the SDT is not breached in the first turn, it will react by using its Sword software on the hacker.

Playtest Tip: Pursuing the Shasvastii Hydra

If the player characters push hard, they have the opportunity to discover that there are multiple Shasvastii agents active on the EveningStar. They might even be able to conclude, rightfully, that there are, in fact, dozens of them. That will raise the alert status on the station several notches. (It will kick up even higher when several high-ranking officials do not respond to the increased alert status and Corporal Yorgos’ teams start finding dead bodies scattered around the station.)

If the player characters push even harder and employ some ingenuity (perhaps using the Shasvastii communications array to ping the other terminals so that they can triangulate the answering signals), they might even be able to track down a few additional Shasvastii agents or their bolt-holes.

That is about the limit of what they can hope to accomplish: There are too many Shasvastii agents aboard the *EveningStar* at this point and there is just not enough time to track them all down (or undo all the damage they have done). There might be a dramatic moment when the player characters breach another data terminal and discover that explosives have been placed in strategic locations all over the station. "Can we stop it?!" "5... 4... 3... 2..." "Oh shit!" "1."

If the player characters abandon Maara Seegur to pursue their investigation, she will be grievously injured in the assassination attempt on her life. The attack is broadcast to the entire Human Sphere and provides a crushing blow to morale. Although Seegur survives, her injury may also have a long-term impact on the Tohaa-Human negotiations.

Shasvastii Diagrams: The charts on the wall have been obfuscated using Shasvastii visualization codes.

- **Analysis (D2):** To successfully reverse the visualization codes, revealing that these charts depict blueprints for the Silver Arch Sphere. The blueprints show that the decorative silver arches are actually hollow and can be accessed from the maze-like ventilation system in the bubble hub.

Using the Blueprints

Knowing that the Speculo Killer will likely use the ventilation shafts in the silver arches grants a +1d20 bonus to spot her during the *Showdown in the Silver Arch Sphere* (see pg. XXX). This bonus increases by an additional +1d20 per 2 Momentum.

Sealing off the ventilation shafts completely would be more difficult, requiring a Tech check (D1). On a success, however, the Speculo Killer would be forced to abandon her sniper rifle. Instead, she would attempt to sneak into the crowd and then perform the assassination at close range using a knife. This scenario will force the Speculo Killer to make an additional Stealth check before attacking.

Work Table: The handguns hanging on the wall above the work table are Shasvastii assault pistols.

- **Ballistics (D1):** The various discarded parts and tools on the work table are clearly the accoutrements from customizing a sniper rifle. The rifle appears to be PanOceanian in origin, but the modifications seem to be aimed at making it fit a Shasvastii hand.

Ventilation Shaft: Other than the door, the only other exit from the room is a ventilation shaft. (This is, in fact, how the Speculo Killer left the room without being seen in the surveillance footage. She is effectively off-the-grid now.)

Protecting Maara Seegur

The primary problem with protecting Ambassador Seegur's life is that she is insistent on continuing her regular schedule of activities. Knowledge that the infamous Shasvastii "Roshnii" code has been issued will only stiffen her resolve: The Shasvastii's goal is to disrupt the alliance between Tohaa and humanity. If they allow the mere threat of an attack to force them into hiding, then the Shasvastii have already accomplished their aims. It would simply be unconscionable to appear weak in the very first week of the Summit.

With that being said, a Persuade test (D2) combined with appropriate arguments ("your life is too valuable to risk", "assuming a minimal profile until we can neutralize the threat won't significantly hurt the Summit", etc.) will convince Ambassador Seegur to cancel *most* of her regular diplomatic schedule.

Unfortunately, the one event she will absolutely refuse to cancel is the Plenary Committee meeting taking place in the Silver Arch Sphere. (This is, of course, the very opportunity that the Speculo Killer is planning to use for her attack.)

Makaul Honor Guard: It should be noted that Seegur is accompanied by three Makaul troopers. In addition to providing an additional layer of defense, this guard triad is one of the reasons Seegur feels secure in pushing ahead with her regular activities.

Makaul Troopers

Attributes											
Brawn						Agility			Awareness		
12						9			8		
Coordination		Intelligence				Willpower			Personality		
10		8				8			6		
Fields of Expertise											
Combat		Fortitude		Movement		Senses		Social		Technical	
EXP	FOC	EXP	FOC	EXP	FOC	EXP	FOC	EXP	FOC	EXP	FOC
+2	2	+2	2	+1	1	+2	2				
Vigour		14	Resolve		10	Firewall		8	Soak		3

Notes: Soak 3 is from Tohaa Symbiotic Armour.

Attack: CombiRifle

CombiRifle

Function – Rifle: Medium Range, 1+5[CD] damage, Burst 2, 2-Handed, Expert 1

Showdown in the Silver Arch Sphere

The Plenary Committee meetings are theoretically designed to finalize the proposals honed by the various commissions. At this early point in the Alliance Summit, however, the meeting is pure political theater: Maya reporters have been invited and the largely ceremonial proceedings will be broadcast live across Paradiso to showcase the brave new alliance. (This is why Seegur is so completely resistant to the idea of not attending.)

The Plenary Committee itself is made up of the Tohaa diplomatic triad (Maara Seegur, Paanil Commaara, and Naaz Engooril) and all the major ambassadors of the Human Sphere (Marc Cullen, Aaron Strong, Fidda Balawi, Samuel Narváez, and Lisa Díaz).

In addition to the player characters, there are nine Tohaa Makaul troopers (the honor guard triads for each of the three Tohaa ambassadors) and a full O-12 security team being commanded by Corporal Yorgos. All of those security personnel are going to be doing their jobs. Yorgos wants the player characters to continue in their role as roving operators: They are not to overtly disrupt the meeting, but he wants them to follow their gut.

The Assassination Attempt: As the Plenary Committee meeting begins, the various ambassadors will take their seats. The floating cameras of the media will whirl and rise and turn their attention towards the dais. Ambassador Seegur will then rise, call the meeting to order, and begin making a short speech.

Thirty seconds into that speech, the Speculo Killer will take her shot.

The decorative silver arches in the sphere are actually hollow and can be accessed from the ventilation system. The Speculo Killer has made her way up to the top of one of the arches. She will emerge through the hatch up there, line up her shot, and take it.

If the player characters are not present, she gets away with it. If the player characters are present, each of them get to make an Observation test opposed by the Speculo Killer's Stealth test. Players who succeed will see her emerge from the top of the arch and will have a free round of action before the shot is fired.

After the shot is fired (or the player characters sound a warning), Yorgos' team will secure the Human Sphere ambassadors and escort them out of the room. (They will not be of immediate assistance in taking down the Speculo Killer. That is the player characters' job.) The Makaul triads will each move to protect their

respective ambassadors, with the triad guarding Seegur potentially assisting the player characters in targeting the Speculo Killer.

Playtest Tip: The Cardoso Distraction

If Cardoso is still present on the station and has interacted with the player characters previously, then she is quite likely to seek them out for a quick interview. The Speculo Killer might also choose to imitate her during the assassination attempt.

Speculo Killer

The Speculo Killer is tenacious and willing to martyr herself for the cause. If given the opportunity, she will drop into the panicking crowd and use its cover to alter her physical appearance before striking again.

Attributes											
Brawn						Agility			Awareness		
8						9			9		
Coordination			Intelligence			Willpower			Personality		
10			8			8			5		
Fields of Expertise											
Combat		Fortitude		Movement		Senses		Social		Technical	
EXP	FOC	EXP	FOC	EXP	FOC	EXP	FOC	EXP	FOC	EXP	FOC
+2	2			+1	1	+2	2	1	1		
Vigour		14	Resolve		10	Firewall		8	Soak		2

Notes: Soak 2 is from Biotechnology.

Attack: Sniper Rifle, Assault Pistol

Change Form: 3 Heat to force an Observation (D2) test to find the Speculo Killer again. A Speculo Killer attacking from hiding gains an Exploit (+2d20 to hit and +2[CD] damage) to the attack.

Sniper Rifle

Function – Rifle: Medium Range, 2+5[CD] damage, Burst 1, 2-Handed, Unforgiving 2

Assault Pistol

Function – Pistol: Close Range, 1+3[CD] damage, Burst 2, Unbalanced, Close Quarters, Spread 1

Scenario Thread: On the Big Stage

This is an opportunity for the player characters to get noticed by some very important and very powerful people. (Some of whom could easily end up owing the player characters their lives.) Depending on how things play out, the players' actions could also end up getting broadcast to the entire Human Sphere as they become Heroes of the Hour™. (That's a registered trademark of *Eye on the Sky*.)

THE FALL OF THE EVENINGSTAR

Over the past several hours, the Shasvastii have been systematically assassinating key defense personnel on the EveningStar (and, in some cases, replacing them).

Next, several high-profile assassinations are carried out nearly simultaneously with the attack on Ambassador Seegur. Most of these succeed. These assassinations are coordinated with the mass-launching of surface-to-orbit missiles from Combined Army positions on Paradiso.

Ordinarily, the EveningStar Orbital would have no difficulty swatting these missiles out of the sky. Unfortunately, that is when the explosives planted in various locations around the station detonate. Those explosions, coupled with strategic sabotage by Shasvastii onboard, cripple the station's defenses and maneuvering capability.

At this point, there is still a momentary hope that the situation might be salvaged. That is when the additional missile barrages, launched from hidden platforms located elsewhere in the Paradiso system, burn their final stage of propulsion and pop up on the EveningStar's compromised sensors. Simultaneously, a Combined Army battle cruiser blasts out of its stealth run from the opposite direction and begins pouring a hellstorm of armament towards the EveningStar, overwhelming its remaining point defenses.

Melissa has no choice. She hands direct control of the facility over to ALEPH, who begins coordinating an urgent evacuation of the Orbital. Senior delegates and a lucky few are ushered by security personnel to emergency crash coffins which will carry them to safety. Others are left to scramble desperately in the various docking facilities of the Orbital.

The Tohaa Errant ship manages to undock from the EveningStar and launches an attack on the Combined Army battle cruiser which eventually destroys it (although not before the Errant Ship has suffered horrific damage). It is too late to do any good, however.

As the structural cohesion of the EveningStar is lost, ALEPH detonates preprogrammed charges that cause the station to separate into sections. (Each of the docking discs goes spiraling out on powerful thrusters, buying a few precious minutes for additional evacuation ships to launch.) A few minutes later, additional charges are blown, reducing the once-proud orbital to debris that will

burn up in the Paradiso atmosphere during re-entry (instead of raining down as fiery debris upon the planet surface).

It is one of the greatest disasters of the entire war.

The player characters, of course, are caught right in the middle of it.

Alarums...

The alarms start either shortly before or shortly after the player characters take out the Speculo Killer. Corporal Yorgos can report on what is happening: Missiles have been launched from Paradiso, but they do not appear to be an immediate threat. (It is probably just an empty show of force.) There is a lot of confusion, but it appears there may have been additional assassination attempts that have disrupted other Alliance Summit meetings.

Give the player characters enough time to try to formulate a response to this. An action or two each. Or a few minutes of confused debate. Before they can really accomplish much of anything, the other shoe drops.

...And Explosions

Explosions rock the EveningStar Orbital. The distant sound echoes through the bubble hubs and the bulkheads rattle with a disturbing resonance.

After a moment of panic (particularly from any civilians still present), Corporal Yorgos can once again provide a quick update: Bombs have gone off throughout the superstructure of the EveningStar.

An avatar of Melissa appears in the local AR: "Please do not panic. Emergency teams are responding now. A full damage assessment—" Melissa abruptly vanishes.

Ambassador Seegur curses. "*Gathaak spawl*. A Combined Army battle cruiser is attacking the station."

Evacuation

The players may be taking any number of actions in response to this unfolding sequence of catastrophes, but a few moments later the emergency alarms are going to be replaced with evacuation alarms. At that point, Corporal Yorgos will order the player characters to escort Ambassador Seegur to her crash coffin. (He will also order other teams to arrange for the separate evacuation of the other ambassadors to different crash coffins.)

The Silver Arch Sphere is located in the middle of the local bubble hub. The crash coffins are located on the outer skin of the station. There is a long haul between where the player characters begin and the crash coffins.

The Madding Crowd

The most immediate problem are the large crowds of panicking people filling the bubble hub. In order to get through the crowds, the player characters will need to generate a total of six Momentum on skill checks, plus one additional Momentum for each failure on a skill check.

The players, of course, may propose any number of appropriate methods for dealing with the crowds. Simply call for the appropriate skill checks at Difficulty 0. For their part, the crowds may also assert themselves and force checks. (Successes on these checks count towards the players' total required for escape unless the GM spends Heat to trigger them.)

Pushing Through: Close Combat checks can be used by the player characters to simply physically force their way through the crowd. (This is the simplest and most direct method of escaping the hub.)

Crowd Crush: The player characters must pass Resistance tests or become Dazed as a result of the thick crowds pushing in on them.

Plea for Help: Someone desperate (or possibly someone they know) recognizes the player characters as a potential salvation. They approach and beg for help. If the player characters drive them off or use a Persuade check to get them to move on, that counts as a single Momentum. If they agree to help them, they will need to generate an additional Momentum to escape the hub.

Frightened Assault: Some of the people on the station have leapt to the conclusion that the Tohaa have betrayed them and are attacking the EveningStar. When they see the Tohaa traveling with the player characters, they will attack. Driving them off counts as a success.

Mob Members

Attributes											
Brawn						Agility				Awareness	
8						8				8	
Coordination			Intelligence			Willpower				Personality	
8			8			8				8	
Fields of Expertise											
Combat		Fortitude		Movement		Senses		Social		Technical	
EXP	FOC	EXP	FOC	EXP	FOC	EXP	FOC	EXP	FOC	EXP	FOC
Vigour		4	Resolve		4	Firewall		4	Soak		0

Mobs attack in groups of 5 as if they were one creature. For every member in a mob standing they roll 1d20 for all skill tests. Mobs cannot take reactions.

Morat Boarding Parties

After the player characters have managed to escape the bubble hub, the crowd thins out and it becomes a little easier to make forward progress. Shortly thereafter, however, they will hear fresh screams of panic coming from ahead. One or two people run out of a crossing hallway up ahead – and are gunned down from behind!

Pinnaces from the Combined Army battle cruiser have ripped through the hull of the EveningStar and delivered Morat boarding parties. Shasvastii agents provocateur have joined up with these boarding parties to wreak further havoc aboard the station.

Morat Troopers

Attributes											
Brawn						Agility				Awareness	
11						9				8	
Coordination			Intelligence			Willpower				Personality	
9			8			8				6	
Fields of Expertise											
Combat		Fortitude		Movement		Senses		Social		Technical	
EXP	FOC	EXP	FOC	EXP	FOC	EXP	FOC	EXP	FOC	EXP	FOC
+1	1	+3	3	+1	1	+1	1				
Vigour		7	Resolve		5	Firewall		4	Soak		3

Note: Soak 3 is from Battle Armour.

Attack: CombiRifle

Fierce Roar: 1+4[CD] Intimidation technique.

CombiRifle

Function – Rifle: Medium Range, 1+5[CD] damage, Burst 2, 2-Handed, Expert 1

Playtest Tip: A Brave Makaul Sacrifice

If you do not want to continue juggling the Makaul troopers guarding Ambassador Seegur, have a Morat boarding party close on the player characters' position. The Makaul troopers can make the player characters swear to protect the Ambassador with their lives and then move to engage the Morat in a suicidal holding action to buy more time.

Spin

At some point during their flight — either while dealing with the madding crowd or fighting the maddened Morat — the gravity spin in this section of the EveningStar will fail.

While in zero-gravity, the GM can spend 2 Heat to force a character to perform a Vacuum test (D1) or Resistance test (D2) to avoid becoming Perplexed. In addition, characters without the Vacuum skill must succeed on an Acrobatics test (D1) as a Minor Action each time they wish to perform a physical action. On a failure, the difficulty of the action increases by +1.

At some point thereafter, their section of the station breaks free. (Either due to damage being inflicted by the Combined Army attack or because ALEPH has blown the separation charges.) Once that happens, the local frame of reference will begin rotating in an uncontrolled spin and the difficulty of the Resistance and Acrobatics tests provoked by zero-gravity increase by +1.

CRASH COFFIN FINALE

If the player characters manage to fight their way through the Morat boarding parties, it just requires a final mad dash for them to reach the crash coffins as the EveningStar breaks up around them.

You can add tension to this final flight by spending 2 Heat to have the player characters dodge debris from the collapsing station (avoiding the debris is an Acrobatics (D1) or Vacuum (D2) test, dealing 4[CD] damage on a failure). 1 Heat can be used to put an NPC they have decided to help at risk.

At the Crash Coffin

As the player characters approach the crash coffin, another Morat boarding party comes up behind them. They can fight, but more Morat forces continue to arrive and the station continues breaking up. (Perhaps they can hear the distant rush of compartments being opened to vacuum.)

Crash Coffin Door: The door is bio-locked to Ambassador Seegur. As long as she is still alive, she can just place her hand against it and it will open. Otherwise, the door will have to be hacked open.

Crash Coffin Door

Firewall 3

Escape!

Once everyone is aboard the crash coffin, it is literally just the push of a button to launch it. Read or summarize the following:

The restraint harnesses aboard the crash coffin strain to keep up with the g-forces of the sudden, sharp acceleration that drives you away from the EveningStar. The AR displays that dance across the bulkheads of the coffin make it seem as if you are staring directly into space: Behind you, the orbital is a collapsing chaos. Huge streamers of shattered metal coruscate away from the central bulk of the station. The once-smooth spindle is a jagged, broken splinter. The massive docking discs have been blown off the station – you can see them spinning away through space, although one of them has cracked in two.

To one side, in a cataclysm of incomprehensible fire, you can see the Tohaa Errant Ship fighting toe-to-toe in an insane battle of broadsides with the Combined Army battlecruiser.

Below and ahead, the green and blue jewel of Paradiso hangs like a beacon of serenity compared to the infernos behind you, offering a false promise of tranquility. For you know that, there too, the war rages on.